

**Submission  
No. 40**

## **DRIVER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ROAD SAFETY**

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**Organisation:** Amy Gillett Foundation  
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20 February 2017

Attention: The Hon Greg Aplin MP  
Chairman of Staysafe –  
Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety

Parliament of New South Whales  
Macquarie Street, Sydney  
NSW 2000

Lodged online via:  
[www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/staysafe](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/staysafe)

Dear Mr Greg Aplin MP,

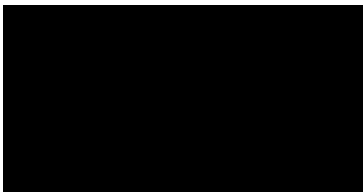
The Amy Gillett Foundation (AGF) welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Inquiry into Driver Education, Training and Road Safety. The Amy Gillett Foundation has a direct interest in contributing to the conversation about driver education, training and road safety, particularly regarding the interaction with cyclists.

The most important and overarching concern related to driver education and training is the lack of cyclist-related content. Drivers are not taught how to safely interact with cyclists on the road and this can lead to frustration and discomfort for drivers unfamiliar with cycling and an unsafe road environment for cyclists.

In this submission we have provided details of this main concern and responses to the Terms of Reference. We have also included references to two major studies on driver licensing and cyclists: one conducted in the Australian Capital Territory that led to the development of a new vulnerable road user competency; and the Cycle Aware study, a national study funded by the Australian Research Council that is currently underway. The Amy Gillett Foundation is involved in both these studies.

We look forward to the next steps in relation to driver training and education in New South Wales. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Yours sincerely,



Phoebe Dunn  
**Chief Executive Officer**

## Amy Gillett Foundation

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The Amy Gillett Foundation (AGF) is a national organisation with a mission to reduce the incidence of serious injury and death of bicycle riders in Australia. We draw on evidence and international best practice, and collaborate with governments, business and the community to create a safer environment for cyclists, while maintaining an efficient road network for all road users.

## Terms of Reference – AGF response

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This inquiry provides an opportunity to address a significant gap in the current driver education and training practices, specifically in relation to safely sharing the road with cyclists. Currently the primary focus of driver education and training is the safety of vehicle occupants with little regard for the potential to cause harm to non-occupant road users including cyclists, pedestrians and motorcyclists. We have provided specific responses to the Terms of Reference below.

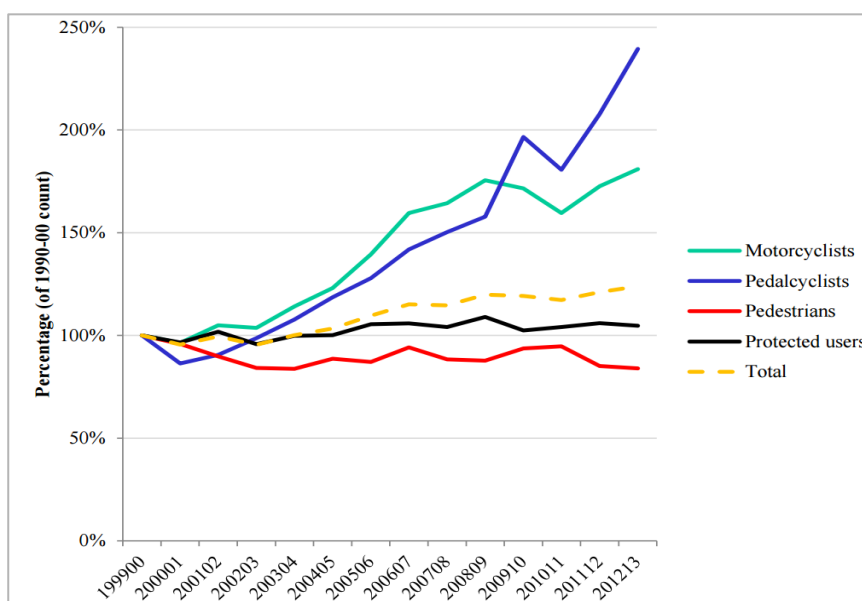
### a) Trends in road safety research and crash statistics

Vulnerable, unprotected road users are currently the groups with high relative rates of road trauma – cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians. Over the ten years from 2006 to 2015 in New South Wales, on average over 1,000 people per annum were injured as a result of a crash while cycling.

While the trend of cyclist trauma is concerning, the modelling of high threat to life injuries for cyclists is alarming and clearly highlights the need for immediate action to improve safety for all cyclists (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Harrison, J (2014). Serious injury of vulnerable road users. Research Centre for Injury Studies, Flinders University, [https://infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/nrsf/2014/files/Session\\_5\\_James\\_Harrison.pdf](https://infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/nrsf/2014/files/Session_5_James_Harrison.pdf)



**Figure 1: High Threat to Life Injuries traffic cases by user type: change 1999-2013 as a percentage of 1999 levels**

A recent review of cyclist safety by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics<sup>2</sup> (BITRE) reported that nationally, the majority of cyclist casualty crashes involved another vehicle (85%) and highlighted crashes at an intersection from perpendicular or opposing directions, side-swipes, collisions with vehicle doors and rear-ends.

The overrepresentation of vehicles in cyclist trauma crashes highlights the need for greater education, awareness and skills among drivers to ensure safe behaviour when sharing the road with cyclists.

## **b) Evaluating current driver training, including the effectiveness of refresher training and skills updating, and adaptation to changing vehicle technology**

### **New driver training**

Cycle Aware is an Australian Research Council Linkage Project research study currently underway that is investigating cyclist-related content in the driver licensing process, including all driver licensing documents and tests (written and on-road skills test). This study is a collaboration between the leading road safety universities (University of Adelaide, Monash University, Queensland University of Technology), state governments, local governments and the AGF.

Early results show that there is very little in the driver licensing process that teaches new drivers about safely sharing the road. An output of the study will include cyclist-related

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) (2015). Australian cycling safety: casualties, crash types and participation levels. [https://bitre.gov.au/publications/2015/files/is\\_071\\_fp.pdf](https://bitre.gov.au/publications/2015/files/is_071_fp.pdf)

learning modules that can be added to the driver training process, skills development and tests.

This project builds on a research study that was conducted in the Australian Capital Territory by Dr Marilyn Johnson, Research and Policy Manager at the AGF and Senior Research Fellow, Monash University. Findings from that study changed the way new drivers in the ACT are trained about sharing the road with vulnerable road users, including cyclists. Specifically, the findings from the research project informed the development of a new learner driver competency module focused on vulnerable road users. Implemented in the ACT on 29 August 2016, all learner drivers are now required to successfully complete this competency module (along with 22 other modules) before they are issued with a probationary drivers licence.

[Link to research paper for the ACT study](#)

[Link to new Vulnerable Road User competency in the ACT](#)

One proposal for improving learner driver exposure and understanding of vulnerable road users is to recognise hours spent riding bicycles in a road environment for the calculation of log book hours. We would recommend trialling the ability to include up to 20 hours of on-road cycling towards the minimum log book hours. The trial would be able to identify any change in crash involvement together with other factors such as driver attitude to vulnerable road users, infringements etc. The AGF would be pleased to assist the NSW Government in designing and implementing such a trial.

### **Refresher training and skills updating**

The study of driver training in the ACT investigated the knowledge and level of comfort in relation to sharing the road with cyclists. Several important aspects were identified:

- Driver training for the majority of licensed drivers did not include information or skills training about sharing the road with cyclists
- Over half of licensed drivers reported they would feel more comfortable sharing the road with cyclists if they had training about:
  - Anticipating cyclists' manoeuvres
  - How the road conditions can cause cyclists to change course
  - How to safely interact with bicycle lanes
  - Interacting with cyclists on a roundabout
  - Parking and giving way to cyclists
  - Checking before opening car doors
  - Overtaking cyclists on different types of roads
  - Right turn when the cyclist is travelling straight
  - Leaving a driveway

Refresher training, both knowledge and skills, in relation to sharing the road with cyclists is needed for two key reasons:

1. to address the gaps in previous driver training practices
2. the majority of supervising drivers are not professional instructors (e.g. parents, friends). Refresher training for supervising drivers is needed to build safe driving practices in new drivers

### **Adapting to changing vehicle technology**

Technological advances have the capacity to deliver major advances in road safety, including for vulnerable road users. Delivery of road safety education and training needs to keep abreast of those technological advances. Notwithstanding, it is important that education and training continues to focus on the current paradigm until such time as it becomes obsolete. A key example is the development of driverless vehicle technology. The reality is that the majority of young motorists will continue to drive older vehicles which may not be equipped with key safety technology features of newer vehicles, such as AEB, and need to be taught core safety skills that apply to the handling of older vehicles.

The AGF's contribution to the NSW Inquiry into Driverless Vehicles and Road Safety can be found [here](#).

### **c) The needs of any particular driver groups**

Existing drivers need to be encouraged and supported to refresh their skills and improve awareness around sharing the road with vulnerable road users, such as cyclists. Developing specific training modules for particular road user groups, such as older drivers, heavy vehicle logistics drivers, public transport drivers, and building and road work contractors will support broader efforts to improve the safety of vulnerable road users.

The AGF has experience in developing specific training and education programs focused on the interaction of motorists and cyclists and cycling safety. Recent examples include the development of face to face and on-line education products for employees of the Toll Group, Australia's largest transport and logistics company; bicycle safety seminars for Australia Post employees; and a webinar for the National Road Safety Partnership Program. The AGF is also involved in the Melbourne Metro Rail Project Vulnerable Road User Forum and Public Engagement and Influence Working Group, supporting the development of education and training for heavy vehicle drivers working on the project.

### **d) The needs of driver trainers, both professional and non-professional**

Professional driver trainers should be required to undertake regular refresher training to ensure their skills remain up to date and relevant. This is particularly the case when new road laws are introduced, such as minimum passing distance legislation (a metre matters laws), and will become increasingly important with technological advances that impact on road safety. Government policy to support the maintenance of skills, such as subsidised

training courses and incentives to learner drivers to undertake training with professional driving instructors will help to support optimum skills acquisition both for the professional driving instructor and the learner driver.

In addition, easily accessible training material for non-professional driving instructors (such as parents and friends) should also be developed to help ensure the next generation of motorists are being taught by drivers with up to date knowledge of road laws and safety issues.

#### **e) The needs of metropolitan, rural and regional drivers**

Safe driver behaviour around cyclists includes identifying specific safety issues that arise in different road contexts (metropolitan, rural and regional). Examples include how to drive safely around cyclists on rural and regional roads with little or no shoulder; in mountainous regions; and in metropolitan areas with no dedicated or separated bicycle lanes.

#### **f) The needs and expectations of passengers and other road users**

Safe passenger behaviour is essential to cyclist safety. A car door being opened unexpectedly in front of a cyclist, even by a small child, can be fatal for a cyclist. In Melbourne, a car door is opened in front of a cyclist every second trip.<sup>3</sup> Similar experiences are likely for people riding bicycles in New South Wales.

Greater awareness and education around safe car door behaviour, both for drivers and passengers is needed across Australia. Further, in the event that a cyclist is seriously injured or killed in a collision with a vehicle door, existing laws must be enforced.

#### **g) The cost of driver training standards and how the costs should be allocated**

There is a need for harmonisation of driver training standards, not just in New South Wales but nationally in Australia. The end result needs to be consistent, high standard driver training delivered with a strong emphasis on the responsibility of being a safe vehicle user and the potential to cause harm to vulnerable road users.

Cost is an important consideration in creating high standard driver training standards, but should not be used as an excuse or barrier. We support price signals for consumers of driver training. This will also help to reinforce the value of driver instruction. It may be appropriate in some social or remote situations for the government to offer supported driver training.

In conversations with experts from the driver training industry, other cost related considerations have been raised. For example, how logbook hours are recorded for learner

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<sup>3</sup> Johnson, M., Newstead, S., Oxley, J., & Charlton, J. (2013). Cyclists and open vehicle doors: crash characteristics and risk factors. *Safety science*, 59, 135-140.

drivers undertaking structured driving lessons with a licensed Driving Instructor compare to a parent or friend. In NSW learner drivers have to record 120 hours of supervised driving before attempting the test. For every **one hour** structured driving lesson completed with a licensed Driving Instructor, a learner can record **three hours**, with a maximum of 10 hours of lessons accepted and recorded as 30 hours driving experience. This type of incentive will support skills development and direct learners to professional driver trainers and courses.

#### **h) The experience of other jurisdictions, and interstate cross-border issues**

Researchers involved in the Cycle Aware project are currently analysing the cyclist-related content in driver licensing documents and tests nationally. This study will provide the first national overview of cyclist-related content. Further, outputs from the Cycle Aware study will include development of modules that can be incorporated into existing driver training and tests. These are being developed in collaboration with road safety experts in the Netherlands.

Ultimately, the AGF is advocating for consistent education, training and testing requirements relating to vulnerable road users across Australia, informed by the Cycle Aware study and international best practice as a key safety measure.

#### **i) Other related matters**

##### **Quota sampling of test questions and skill requirement – learner and probationary licences**

Currently driver test questions are generated from a large test bank that does not quota sample to ensure inclusion of questions directly related to cyclists or vulnerable road users more broadly. Further, if a cyclist related question is included and the applicant answers it incorrectly, this does not result in a failed test – unless they also fail additional questions.

An unintended consequence of this is that students and professional driving instructors skip over the ‘non-critical’ aspects of driver training to focus on those questions and knowledge/skills area that do result in a failed test outcome. Numerous driving instructors reported in the ACT study that ‘we teach the test’. As cyclists and vulnerable road users are not on the test, they are not a focus of the driver training.

Further, in jurisdictions that do not include cyclists in the skills test, there is little focus on safe interaction with cyclists in the on-road training.

To ensure new drivers have skills to safely share the road with cyclists, cyclist-related questions and skills must be compulsory - that is questions must be included on the written and in the on-road tests.



### **Schools based road safety education**

Schools based road safety education provides important foundations for the acquisition and development of positive road safety skills and behaviours. Supporting the delivery of consistent and age appropriate road safety education as part of the primary and secondary school curriculum, with specific modules focused on vulnerable road users such as cyclists, will help to ensure the next generation of motorists are cyclist aware, and support safe road use interaction.

### **Concluding remarks**

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The Amy Gillett Foundation is concerned about the lack of cyclist related content in the education and training of learner drivers. Drivers are not taught how to safely interact with cyclists on the road and this can lead to frustration and discomfort for drivers unfamiliar with cycling and an unsafe road environment for cyclists.

Addressing the gaps identified in this submission, including by providing for consistent education, training and testing requirements relating to vulnerable road users across Australia, will help to improve the safety of cyclists, and create a more harmonious and safer road environment for all.